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Drama

THE QUARTERLY
THEATRE REVIEW

EDITED BY IVOR BROWN

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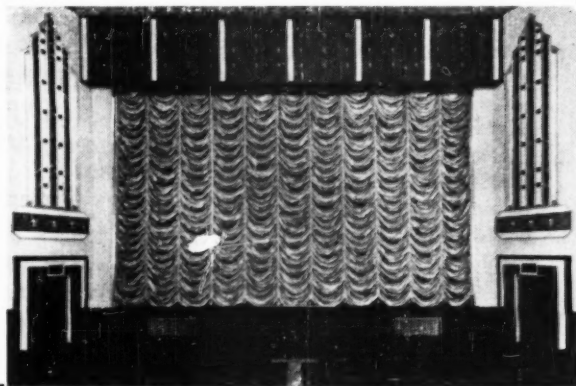
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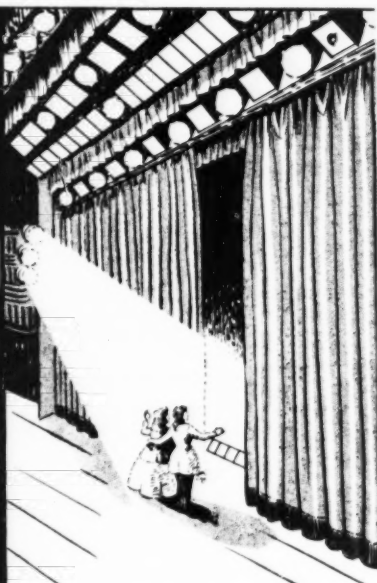
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DRAMA

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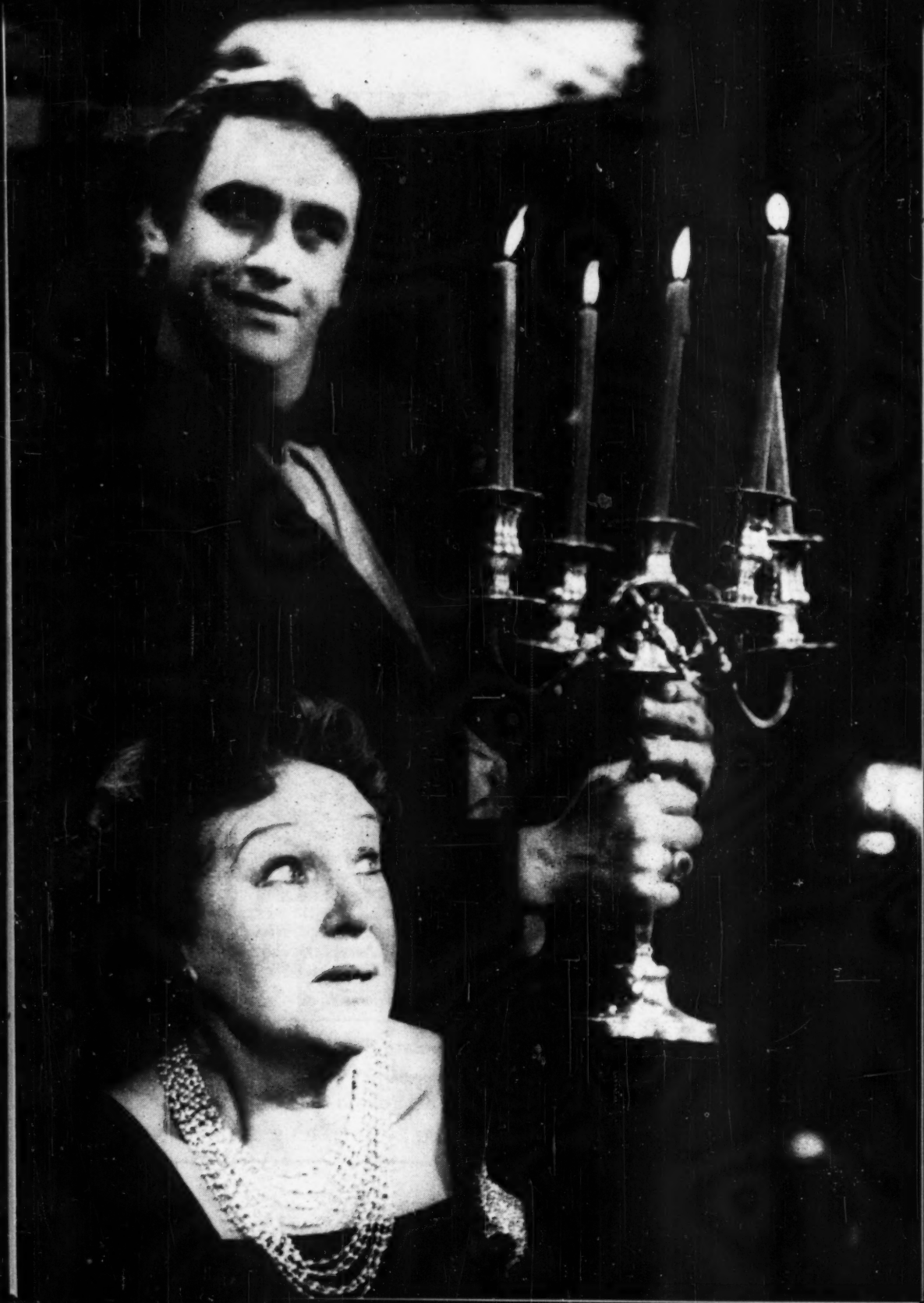
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A BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE PUBLICATION



HIS HOUSE IN ORDER

AMATEUR actors are often badly in need of premises in which to work. So, in some cases, are professionals, but their requirements are larger; the amateur with small resources may have to be satisfied with a parish hall, if he can get it. The vicar, responsible for the use of such a building, can reasonably, as well as legally, insist that he will not accept tenants whose performances are offensive to the opinions and sensibilities of his congregation. So far, so fair. But it was astonishing to read that one Church of England vicar had drawn the line at Noel Coward's harmless little play *Fumed Oak* which has had the Lord Chamberlain's approval for thirty years.

It is perhaps too much to ask that all hall owners should always accept the official licences of fitness for public performance since the censorship is now tolerant of themes, and dialogue, which would have been banned without question not long ago. 'Fings ain't wot they used t'be', but Aunt Edna is not so changeable. 'Fings' now relished by some are repulsive to others. These others can, of course, stay away. But owners of property with strict views of its proper use are free to refuse the kind of lodger whom they do not like.

Recently in the West End of London there were five plays running at once whose action centred on brothels and prostitution. These things exist and it is part of the theatre's business to consider all sides of life. In the case of the most squalid it should expose but not exploit them. There are plays against which a nervous cleric might padlock his parish hall even though those plays have been passed at St. James's Palace as worthy to be seen by all. But *Fumed Oak*!

Fortunately for apprehensive clergymen, fearing that their premises will become disorderly houses, and for other people with some sense of the drama's dignity, the amateurs are not offenders as a rule. They are not paddling in the muddier shallows of Show Business and need not seek to win the money of oafs 'out for a giggle'. In many cases they are quite ambitious in the choice of a serious and difficult play. Nor do they shrink from speaking out what may decently be spoken while making the drama a serviceable mirror of the practices and opinions of the time. But that does not make them what the early Puritans thought them, vessels of corruption and limbs of Satan. So there is no occasion for panic when the secretary of the local Thespians puts in an offer to hire premises under ecclesiastical control.

An occurrence of this kind does, however, suggest the advisability of having one's own house to keep in order. It is true that small companies with small means, which do not, of course, preclude large and high purposes, find it difficult or even impossible to have their own Little Theatre. But there have been many encouraging and successful examples of the house that Jack built—or at least transformed from a neglected barn, shed, stable or meeting-room into a self-maintenant and self-governing theatre. To mention exemplary names would be easy, but it would be an aggravation to those not named to specify only a few.

It is a process which must continue. The British Drama League was an early supporter of the Civic Theatre and the Civic Authorities here and there are showing increasing readiness to support the self-help of the players. This need not apply to only large towns: the smaller communities need intelligently run theatres quite as much or even more. The actors can best be masters of their homes if they are their own tenants. The freeholder has more than one kind of freedom.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

By J. W. LAMBERT

WHAT, when we stop to think about it, do we mean by the West End theatre? We mean, I take it, those playhouses in the centre of London which are under commercial management and which are, in effect, the only ones which the great body of the general public is aware of. Enthusiasts look on it with disfavour, because it is not the place to find bold experiment or epoch-making theatrical developments: on the contrary, although it will absorb these if they show signs of success, it always blunts and often destroys them. We should not be too hard on it, all the same; compared with Broadway it is a temple of enlightenment; compared with itself twenty-five years ago it offers a surprisingly high level of intelligence and style. But there must be something wrong with a popular theatre which, during a three-month period covering the end of 1961 and the beginning of 1962, presented only one new play, and that one contemptible.

I don't thus dismiss *Critic's Choice* (Vaudeville Theatre) because it holds a critic up to ridicule. I do so because it is shoddily written, unsuitably produced, and on the whole wretchedly acted. An American comedy by Ira Levin, it not only shows us the critic as rogue, but makes much play with blue-tinted connubial humours. Its setting and idiom remain Long Island; all the leading players, however, remain aggressively upper-class English. Muriel Pavlow looks extremely pretty; Mr. Ian Carmichael—and the whole enterprise is clearly no more than a vehicle for his brand of dapper fooling—deploys his small though pleasing range of expression and gesture in various exercises in petulance, drunkenness, deceit and repentance. Here, in short, is a prize example of the com-

mercial theatre at its lowest, providing with cynical glitter second-rate entertainment for empty heads—and, I repeat, the only new piece that the West End theatre has been able to provide during a whole quarter of a year.

It has, to be fair, its worthier successes—most notably (not counting Anouilh's double, *The Rehearsal*, taken over from the Bristol Old Vic, and *Becket*, taken over from the Royal Shakespeare Company) Ronald Millar's adaptation of C. P. Snow's novel, *The Affair* (Strand Theatre). It is no surprise that this play should have been well thought of; it is a surprise, and a welcome one, that it should become a sensationally well-established hit. Originally the central role of Lewis Eliot (the embodiment of persuasive common sense in a wrangling world) was played with four-square reserve by John Clements; it has now been taken over by Alec Clunes. Mr. Clunes also took over the part of Professor Higgins in *My Fair Lady* and made a success of it despite the fact that he automatically exudes the very reverse of irascibility. He also makes a success of Lewis Eliot although on the face of it, so to speak, his twinkling chubbiness doesn't at all match the care-worn benevolence of the character Snow originally created. But the richness of his voice strikes warmly across the dusty bickering of the Cambridge college and humanely links its problems to those of the chaotic world we live in.

It is precisely because, for all its faults, our West End theatre is not as bad as Broadway that we do not have any real equivalent of 'off-Broadway'. It would never do to underestimate the influence of the Royal Court, the Theatre Royal, Stratford, and in its time the Arts, to say nothing of the intermittent enterprise of the Mermaid, Bernard Miles's open-stage emporium



MERVYN JOHNS and GLYN OWEN in 'The Keep' by Gwyn Thomas at the Royal Court Theatre. Photograph by Sandra Lousada.

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The English Stage Company, at the Royal Court, produced only two straight plays off its own bat. First came a first venture on to the stage by Gwyn Thomas, talker, novelist and all-round Welsh humorist. All-round Welsh humour, in fact, was what *The Keep* largely had to offer. A family chronicle, it explored in what might have been Chekhovian depth the ingrowing constriction of a father, a daughter and five fully-grown sons living in the shadow of the memory of Mam. The play was directed by John

Dexter with sober realism; the Welsh cast, led by Mervyn Johns, played down any stage-Welsh clowning—rightly, it seemed at the time, for Gwyn Thomas provides such a foundation of humour, of fantastical elaboration and verbal fireworks that the piece was in any case rendered half inaudible by our ready laughter. On reflection I am not so sure. These people might have been characters, but were not; there were in fact too many jokes, and too many of them might have been cracked by almost any of the actors. If the production had presented us with a highly stylized charade our misgivings might have been allayed; yet even as I write these cavilling words I feel a stab of guilt, for *The Keep* in fact offered more whole-hearted laughter than I have had in the theatre for a very long time, not least from a deliciously watery-eyed performance by Denys Graham as a timorous choirmaster transformed into very peacock by the prospect of conducting a choir of eighty virgins on television.

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appears to have much in common with his compatriot Dürrenmatt, including a taste for the grotesque which wrestles exuberantly with a truly Teutonic determination that we shall not miss the point. The point of *The Fire Raisers* is that a materialist (here equated with a comfortable *bourgeois*) will go to any lengths to avoid recognizing any irrational evil, in himself or in the outside world, which threatens not so much his comfort as his notion of the order of things. A chorus of comic firemen agreeably lengthened the anecdote and parodied Greek lamentations and forebodings, while Alfred Marks, tall, bald and portly, beautifully embodied the craven compromises of a man of substance confronted with the unknown. Coldly he bullied his household, greasily he joked with the muscle-man who so strangely invaded his house: Colin Blakely, with forearms like oak trees to back up a terrible jocularly—and soon to be joined by James Booth as a finicking ex-waiter. Steadily the tension rose, as the arsonists filled the loft with fuel, until, after a terrible last supper, the world went up in flames. Lindsay Anderson's production did nothing to lighten the dramatist's naturally heavy hand, but his actors loaded every zany threat and crawling evasion with reproachful laughter.

For the rest, the Royal Court gave us a short visit by a company from the Cambridge Arts Theatre with a third play, *That's Us*, by Henry Chapman. Like *You Can't Always be on Top* and *On the Wall*, this little piece depicts a group of labourers with, this time, some roughly caricatured suburbanites for contrast. It took us through a day's work and talk, made it clear that if suburbanites are stuffy, labourers are ignorant, stupid and dishonest, offered no political, social or economic comment, and petered quietly out.

It is always difficult to know what to do with naturalism when you have achieved it. Mr. Chapman does nothing with it. Henry Livings, on the other hand, fairly kicks it around. His first

play, *Stop It, Whoever You Are*, was part working-class farce, part expressionist fantasy; and so, up to a point, was *Big Soft Nellie*, which briefly visited Theatre Workshop's old home at the Theatre Royal, Stratford. Once again we had a victim as central figure—a big, slow, dreamy wireless mechanic, worrying in the back of a provincial shop. And this time, by way of widening the scope, his boss (the shop's owner) was a victim too, and the pair provided a couple of first-rate acting opportunities, finely taken. Bryan Pringle made the hero (or anti-hero, in current jargon) a notable figure of lumbering near-despair, always thinking up mottoes and groping dimly in half-formed words towards some brighter truth. Roy Kinnear, by contrast short and fat, made of the boss an exquisite study of uneasy self-importance. At one point Stanley launches into an absurd flight of inchoate fancy while standing on the boss's foot. Somehow these two actors achieved the remarkable feat of enabling us to roar with laughter at Mr. Kinnear's antics without ever losing interest in what Mr. Pringle was saying, a feat of 'playing together' I have seldom seen excelled. There were many other rewarding moments in this rough-hewn little play; in fact Mr. Livings has provided a sort of adult pantomime script which tails off into an incomprehensible final curtain. He also provided, as in *Stop It, Whoever You Are*, a disquieting touch of cruelty which leaves a nasty taste behind it, and to say the least shadows his concern with the sufferings of the meek.

Mr. Livings has written a good deal for television and this, I believe, may account for the noticeably fragmentary nature of his two stage plays. In a play written for television the camera, or the mind behind the camera, provides an implicit commentary which binds its fleeting shots and which simply vanishes in a theatre, which demands an entirely different sort of cement. The absence of this quality was very noticeable in two plays at the Arts. One, in any case a bad



'MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA' by Eugene O'Neill at the Old Vic. Michael Goodliffe and Sonia Dresdel. Photograph by Angus McBean.

play, *The Cupboard* by Rae Digby, was perhaps written for, certainly first acted on, television. The other, altogether more promising, was *The Knacker's Yard*, by a successful TV scriptwriter, Johnny Speight. Both plays were set in a squalid boarding-house, and both were concerned to keep us guessing as to whether the central character was or was not a multiple murderer. In *The Cupboard* Cyril Shaps drew, in lamentable circumstances, a beautifully controlled study of a little, broken, spiteful man far gone in failure, now cringing, now dumbly hopeless, now spitting viciously. Mr. Speight's play, altogether more ambitious, failed partly because it lacked any basic cohesion, and partly because he tried to enrich its texture by using the illiterate to-and-fro talk, too helpless to be called conversation, in the manner of Beckett and Pinter, and was not able to achieve in his repetitions anything more than repetition. But in the spruce young psychopath who was perhaps a murderer, and was certainly a sadistic puritan with a horror of

wantonness and waste, and the filthy old tramp who clung to him yet trembled, Mr. Speight created two dramatically well opposed types (recalling, inevitably and to their detriment, those in *The Caretaker*). Maxwell Shaw sliced out the razor-flourishing young man whose brisk manner so easily lost touch with reality: Dermot Kelly made the bundle of rags sufficiently engaging, and between them they set up clearly enough the contrast between deranged idealism and short-winded, incompetent materialism.

So much for the new plays. It will be seen that the tide flows strongly in favour of black farce on a very, very small scale. The genre begins to pall, but at least it is full of ideas and invention, and for all its concentration on squalor and perversity contains more humane generosity in any one of its grubby scenes than is to be found anywhere in the calculated shoddiness of *Critic's Choice*.

To turn from them, all the same, to the revivals of the period is to exchange

a gritty cindertrack past the backyards of experience for the great roads trodden by humanity in its bewildering pilgrimage. Not but what some of these are half-buried by time, and some pretty roughly surfaced. The Old Vic, for instance, gave us, neatly, in succession Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, both compressed into an evening apiece. The former came from the Oxford Playhouse in a production, and largely a translation, by Minos Volanakis. In both Mr. Volanakis is aiming, I cannot feel successfully, at a blend of ritual and naturalism. *The Agamemnon*, first of the three plays which make up *The Oresteia*, was also the most successful. The baleful welcome given to the warrior-king home from Troy rang out in Yolanda Sonnabend's simple set, and Agamemnon's golden armour dulled beneath the sombre gaze of Catherine Lacey's Clytemnestra. Not that she was as minatory as could have been wished, but then the whole tone of the production was too intricately varied to allow of much grandeur. The Chorus, at times singly, at times in groups, at times all together, sang or spoke or changed almost in mid-phrase from one to the other. Yvonne Mitchell's Electra and Ronald Lewis's Orestes were never more than distraught young people, and in the final set piece the Furies, inadequate as always, were understandably put out by a Minerva resembling a comic Britannia in a parody of a village pageant. Yet, all cavilling done, all allowances made for the loss in translation, the cramping effect noted of this Greek fatalism badly put into English, and the clumsy construction of these dramatic poems acknowledged, splendour remains in the mind, and—despite all the cruelty, the arbitrary violence—a celebration, not a condemnation, of the spirit of man.

When the same story is refashioned by Eugene O'Neill some 2,500 years later the case is altered. *Mourning Becomes Electra*, creaking under its load of Freudian knowledgeable, is an

appallingly disparaging wallow in Puritan nastiness. There is no scope for tragedy here; this is simply a powerful melodrama touching us only in so far as we feel the anguished accents of O'Neill himself behind the yelps of young Orin Mannon as his father and his mother and his sister betray his dream. Stephen Moore played this young wreck with a full battery of neurotic disharmonies. Tall and slim and weak he turned for help and turned again to snap, and clearly showed us the growing cruelty of the defeated refugee from reality. Sonia Dresdel drove home the thwarted energies of his mother, Christine, clawing uselessly against invisible bonds as she followed the wretched woman down to hell, and Barbara Jefford's Lavinia, white and tight-drawn save in her brief flowering, burnt with a searing horror into this rotten New England fabric. In short, this was a thumping theatrical evening and Val May's production didn't throw away a single gruesome moment—and, equally notable, didn't provide a single misplaced giggle.

Moving back a little in time, dispensing with the Freudian myth yet hardly seeing less deeply without it into the mysteries of the heart, we arrive at the Stratford company's *The Cherry Orchard*. Produced by Michel Saint-Denis, with Peggy Ashcroft as Madame Ranevsky, John Gielgud as Gaev her brother—what more could one ask? Alas, a great deal, for M. Saint-Denis has made a play of fragments here—it sounds almost as though it had been written for television, not least because the 'version by John Gielgud' used is often conspicuously clumsy. This at least cannot be said of Sir John's Gaev, who, all elegance, never looks like a man who ate and drank too much, and who plays his imaginary billiard shots not to himself but to us. And to tell the truth how small-scale or, not to mince matters, how suburban Dame Peggy's Ranevsky is. Provincial she may well have appeared in Paris—suburban never. Then, George Murcell's Lopa-



JOHN GIELGUD with DOROTHY TUTIN and JUDI DENCH in 'The Cherry Orchard' by Chekhov at the Aldwych Theatre. Photograph by John Timbers.

him was weak, Roy Dotrice's Firs obtrusively senile. Only Judi Dench's fresh little Anya and Ian Holm's needling Trofimov arrived at the core of the play. Whether the emphasis is put on nostalgia for the past or hope for the future—as, on the whole, in this production—if the thing does not flow like a perfectly articulated suite for small orchestra, it won't do. And there is something radically amiss when the most powerful emotional moment of the play comes as Paul Hardwick's properly lachrymose Pishchik makes his long farewell.

The arrival in London of the Stratford company's *As You Like It*, along with a revival of the Old Vic's current *Twelfth Night* with a largely new cast, and a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at, of all places, the Royal Court, provokes mixed feelings on the subject of producing Shakespearian comedy—which, incidentally, I believe to be absolutely delightful. I say this because

I find nowadays too many disparage it; I have, however, seen all these plays so well done that I can never subscribe to the view that they are over-praised. Only ignorance, policy (as with Shaw) or perversity can support such a view.

But systems of training and working conditions generally being what they are in the British theatre, it is of course only rarely that we see a production that really lifts the heart. One such, certainly, is Michael Elliott's *As You Like It*—a far cry from *Brand*, his last major production. Mr. Elliott and his cast float the play sweetly along without ignoring the echoes of spite and cuckoldry which sound through it, or masking the sense of those bitter songs ('Most friendship is feigning, Most loving mere folly'). Max Adrian's Jaques, his voice the rattling gourd of an empty spirit, is no mere decoration but in its befurred elegance and its pain a fine portrait. Ian Bannen's Orlando, more restrained than at Stratford, is a study in excited,



VANESSA REDGRAVE and MAX ADRIAN in 'As You Like It' by William Shakespeare at the Aldwych Theatre. Photograph by Dominic.

questing bewilderment. And what use is *As You Like It* if the men in the audience do not fall in love with Rosalind? Vanessa Redgrave makes the process easy enough and never complicates matters by overdoing the boyish disguise. On the contrary, I could wish her a shade less expressively girlish at one or two moments. Yet I have no doubt that her radiance and coltish grace make her a great Rosalind.

Eileen Atkins, taking over from Barbara Jefford in the Old Vic's *Twelfth Night*, gives an oddly interesting performance, for into a still pleasing fairytale production—in which Paul Dane-man makes a drily absurd Malvolio—she projects an unexpectedly modern note. Playing Viola-Cesario as a gawky adolescent, she seems—although herself older than Miss Redgrave—to belong to a different, newer generation of players. She does no violence to the verse, but her naturalism belongs to another manner of acting altogether.

Perhaps it is time we saw some such

change. I hoped to see it embodied in the first Shakespearian production at the Royal Court, Tony Richardson's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; but this unaffectionate muddle gave no acceptable pointers to the future. Mr. Richardson's version mixed child fairies—one uneasily flying—trapdoors, a wandering spotlight and a Puck made to lumber round as though he were wearing full diving kit. It took no pains to see that its mostly very young cast spoke audibly or intelligibly, let alone musically. Its court scenes were perfunctory, its lovers' quarrels tennis-club tiffs, its fairy magic a half-hearted charade. Colin Jeavons's Oberon alone in the cast stirred some memories of wonder, and the rude mechanicals, led by Colin Blakely's muscular weaver, were funny enough in a brusque way. If this points the way of Shakespearian things to come, heaven help us all, and not merely in the theatre; for here was youth at work, but devoid alike of skill and generosity of spirit.

BROADWAY THIS SEASON

By E. MARTIN BROWNE

A BROADWAY season these days is always a matter of fits and starts. Certainly the start of 1961-62 could not be called promising. The left-overs which had survived the summer, or been revived after it, were not distinguished. *Rhinoceros*, twisted out of shape to accommodate a sensational character performance by Zero Mostel as John, had almost disintegrated. The only joy of this period was Tyrone Guthrie's production of *The Pirates of Penzance*, brought down from Stratford, Ontario. Here were no antics, no distortions: just lively, crisp and loving direction with good musicianship, and the old favourite proved its quality once more.

The first offering of interest was *Purlie Victorious*, a farce by a coloured author produced by the same management as *A Raisin in the Sun*. Ossie Davis has tried to put the colour bar in its proper perspective by laughing at it—and at his own people's foibles as well. He plays, with fine *brío*, a minister who is determined to establish a church in the domain of an obsolete Southern white landowner. This character is treated as a stereotype which weakens the impact, but the fun is vigorous and healthy, and the performance though sometimes crude suits the play.

After this, the focus as regards straight plays has been almost entirely on the English imports, and it is gratifying to record that of the four major ones three are successes and all are regarded as of top quality. *The Caretaker* was the first to open, with Donald Pleasence repeating his portrayal of the tramp, and Robert Shaw and Alex Davion as the brothers. This play is as widely discussed in New York as in London, with many people frankly confessing they don't understand it but all finding it a theatrical experience.

Perhaps its motivelessness, which makes it so frightening as well as so funny, seems more difficult to Americans than to Europeans, but of its compulsion there can be no doubt. *The Complaisant Lover*, with Sir Michael Redgrave as the dentist and Googie Withers as his wife, has been coolly received. The surface of English upper middle class life is so smooth as to have deceived most playgoers into thinking that Graham Greene has nothing to say beneath it; and those who have seen deeper have usually been shocked at the acceptance of adultery. America is still more moral than England, if you look in the right place for its morals.

Ross is admired as well as respected, and Americans seem to find the story of T. E. Lawrence as intriguing as the English who know more of its background. John Mills has made a success of the name part, and the play, though no one feels that it settles the question of its hero's character—any more than Anouilh's settles the question of Becket's—makes persuasive entertainment of a high order. But the triumph is *A Man for all Seasons*. No dissenting voice was raised by any critic to the superlatives which surrounded both the play and Paul Scofield's performance, closely seconded by that of George Rose as the Common Man. This is generally voted the best play of the season and a distinguished play in any season; and Mr. Scofield has become a major star on his first appearance here.

Serious American plays of worth were almost wholly absent from the Broadway stage up to the close of the year. The only one to substantiate a claim was Paddy Chayevsky's *Gideon*. Last season Mr. Chayevsky, who came to playwriting by way of television, made a hit with *The Tenth Man*, a modern version of the Dybbuk story set in a

Jewish quarter of Brooklyn. As staged by Tyrone Guthrie it had a compelling native charm, and also something to say which the premises of the play did not lead one to expect. Perhaps this precedent should have provided a warning as one watched the curtain rise on Gideon's story from the Book of Judges, mounted by the same director with all the primitive squalor which a study of early social history would presumably suggest. The author takes a fine, bold step in putting the Lord on the stage (though the programme calls him an angel nobody believes it for a moment) in a great round beard encasing Fredric March's impressive countenance. We find that he is set on winning a victory for his Israelites against the local enemy: but it must be clearly understood that it is *his* victory. Accordingly he picks as his deputy to lead Israel the awkwardest and slowest-witted man in the place, whom he persuades to carry out his apparently silly plan. The victory won, Gideon, who has acted up to that time from a sincere love of his unaccountable Lord, is asked by the people to be their king.

At this point, Mr. Chayevsky parts company with the Book of Judges and Gideon, instead of refusing the kingship, accepts it. From then onwards the true nature of Mr. Chayevsky's thought unfolds itself. Man is learning, blunderingly and perversely, to be self-sufficient: the belief in God is a step on this uncertain road. For with the last line, Mr. March is made to destroy his own character: 'with this conceit we end the play', he says, and reveals himself as another actor who has played God. With Mr. Zuss in *J.B.* we knew this from the first; here, one leaves the theatre with a sense of having been progressively deceived. For one had gone along with the author's bold reversion to the medieval directness of presenting God in person, and had found that person interesting and compelling. Now, instead of the super-reality of the Middle Ages, one is left with a figure of straw. Of course this

is what Mr. Chayevsky has all along intended, so perhaps he should have stayed away from the Bible. But the evening is well spent, even in defeat, and Douglas Campbell's performance as Gideon is the best of his career—vital, touching, funny and passionate.

As the year ended, Tennessee Williams's new play came to take its place alongside *Gideon*; for this year's piece is again a serious drama, unlike last season's ineffective comedy. *The Night of the Iguana* is set in a broken-down hostelry in the tourist part of Mexico; the time is 1940. This fact, which is supposed to provide a large scale parallel to the action of the chief characters, is insufficiently written up and even less sufficiently dramatized in direction, so that the play narrows to a conflict between a predatory woman, a derelict ex-minister whom she wants, and a gallant spinster who is supporting her ninety-year-old poet-father on the proceeds of her paintings, as they wander from place to inhospitable place. This character is new in Williams. Here is the dignity, not of despair, but of ever-springing hope; and here is something else almost unknown in recent drama, a woman who is chaste without being frustrated. This part is played by Margaret Leighton, and remains in one's mind as a treasure of acting. Delicate, tender, refined yet strong, with a gallantry so natural to her that it is achieved without strain, Hannah Jelkes, as Miss Leighton plays her, exalts the soul. Bette Davis easily provides the right foil with a tough, amusing performance, and Patrick O'Neal, if only one could hear more than half his lines, would satisfy one's sense of integrity as the minister. (Audibility is an even bigger problem on Broadway than on Shaftesbury Avenue.) The play introduces a new mood and even perhaps a richer philosophy into Mr. Williams's writing.

Musicals are the safest bet, although the most expensive one, on Broadway. Those who lose their bet are set back

half-a-million dollars or so these days. One such complete loss was interesting as an example of what the real values are in this apparent gamble. *Kwamina* tried to stage the struggle for emergence of the educated African in Africa. Serious subjects have sometimes made successful musicals, as in *The King and I*, but the material has to be thoroughly

waste because the whole had not the necessary discipline over its high spirits.

Sail Away started the season with a huge advance booking solely on the name of its author-composer, Noel Coward. If *Kwamina* needed discipline, *Sail Away* needed bite and vitality. It will last the season, but has already faded into the limbo of things lately



RUDY VALLEE and ROBERT MORSE in 'How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying' at the Fortysixth Street Theatre, New York.

digested before it can be so used. The current situation in Africa is in flux, and the dangers of imbalance and of sentimentality are therefore great. *Kwamina* fell into both; the book in fact was neither true to the real situation nor had anything to say about it. The disorganization evident here was paralleled by the production. It was full of negro dances which in themselves were thrilling, and splashed with riotous colour. But all this seemed to run to

dead. Elaine Stritch heads a cast which does with consummate skill and slickness the behests of its director (same name), and one is grateful for all this; yet one comes away merely nostalgic for *This Year of Grace* or *Bitter Sweet*, or even, at sentimental moments, *Cavalcade*.

The biggest success of the year deserves to be so, and it is called *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. This is the work of a very experienced team, Abe Burrows and Frank Loesser,

and is a satire on American business. It is sharp without malice, extremely witty and genuinely gay. The hero, who climbs up the ladder in the fashion, at once romantic and realistic, which is typical of American life, is played by Robert Morse, and a great deal of the winning quality of the show is due to the fact that he never ceases, even at his most outrageous moments, to claim one's sympathy. He is partnered by Rudy Vallee as the boss with an easy breadth to match his delicacy; and the acting rests mainly on these two. But many other factors contribute to a totality of pure delight. The staging is full of wit: predominant colours are

gold through green to blue, and there are the subtlest uses of a scheme which cannot be faulted at any point.

Equally brilliant is the dancing, which never fails to produce a new piece of wit at the moment when one feels sure that a number has exhausted its possibilities. And the music provides the right basis for it all, with off-beat tunes which can be twisted many ways for such characteristic subjects as *The Coffee Break* and *A Secretary is Not a Toy*. This show is American theatre at its very best: if, when London sees it one day, it retains its sparkle, the indigenous metropolitan humour of the U.S. will at last be fully communicated.

LETTERS FROM CHARLES KEAN

By MARY GARNHAM

AN interesting little collection of letters was recently given to the British Drama League by the Librarian of the Hove Public Libraries, a few of which are printed below.

They are all addressed to Sir John Walter Huddleston (1815-1890), M.P. for Canterbury (and later Norwich) and a Judge of the Queen's Bench. An ardent lover of the theatre, he became the friend and confidant of many actors, including Charles Kean, and had a wide circle of friends at the Garrick Club. Most of the letters are from Charles Kean, but there are others from the dramatist and barrister, Sir Francis Talfourd, the dramatists Edmund Yates and Charles Dance, and from that most prolific writer of melodramas and comedies, Mark Lemon, the first editor of *Punch*.

Kean, over the period of this correspondence, was in sole management at the Princess's Theatre, where his spectacular and antiquarian productions of Shakespeare alternated with 'gentlemanly' melodrama, as befitted a manager whose theatre was visited by the Royal Family, and who, in 1848 and the ten successive years, had been chosen by the Queen to conduct the Christmas theatricals at Windsor.

The letters, often impetuous and demanding, reveal Kean's growing friendship with Judge Huddleston, and furthermore give some hint of his lifelong zest for historical accuracy in his productions, in recognition of which he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1857.

My dear Huddleston,

Friday, 26th Jany, 1855

Could you put yourself so much out of the way as to call upon me some morning in Torrington Square? I want to consult you without paying a fee.

The reason I don't wait on you is, that I am here surrounded by my books of reference which I require to show you during our consultation.

The fact is I want to arrange my scene in Henry 8th for Queen Katharine's

trial—of which there are very slender records as to the arrangement of the Court, but quite sufficient for my purpose with some hints from you as History tells us it was in the fashion of a "Court Judicial". I am always at home at 12 o'clock, when there is no rehearsal from which I am free at present.

You know where Torrington Square is, don't you? It is bounded on the North by the New Rd. on the West by Tottenham Court Rd. on the South by the British Museum & on the East by Russell Sqre.

Yours sincerely,
Chas. Kean

My dear Huddleston,

I cannot tell you how grieved I am to hear of your suffering. Were it not for my never ending rehearsals I would come & see you, but I am sure you will know that it is no want of feeling or sympathy on my part. I am really at moments almost driven wild with the accumulation of business connected with this play of Henry 8th. We have a night rehearsal on Monday and I need scarcely say how glad I shall be to see you, if your eyes will permit. We begin at seven o'clock.

Don't let your stall be empty on Wednesday 16th I beseech you, but if you are unable to go, pray bestow it on some friend, or return to Massingham. I would not for £100 see such a thing as a vacant stall on such a night as Wednesday will be.

I shall miss you dreadfully, but pray run no risk on my acct.

Ever sincerely yours,

11th May, 1855

Charles Kean

Although in *Louis the Eleventh* Kean reached the apotheosis of his career, his acting in *Hamlet*, in parts, surpassed both that of Macready and Charles Kemble, according to a contemporary witness. He writes:

My dear Huddleston,

I am very anxious, after what you said last night, that you should see me in *Hamlet*. It is the character above all others that I prefer & I may safely add that I owe to its impersonation the foundation of whatever fame & fortune I may have acquired!

I am desirous that you should see the play from beginning to end from the best position my Theatre affords. For this purpose let me beg you will make use of the enclosed stall tickets for Wednesday next, with an understanding that you will do me the justice on this occasion of occupying your seats before the overture commences—that is, ten minutes before seven o'clock.

I feel that this penance on your part is necessary, and essential, that you may arrive at a just and proper verdict. Send me one line in reply with an assurance that you will put yourself to this inconvenience to oblige.

Yours sincerely,

2 Feby, 1855

Charles Kean

P.S. I am very anxious for your good opinion of *Hamlet*!

My dear Huddleston,

Wednesday

I want you very much to see *Hamlet* throughout on Monday next.

Let me see you for a minute before that day.

Don't forget like a good boy that the tragedy will begin a minute or so in advance of seven o'clock. Do pray be in your seat before that hour.

Yours ever,

C. Kean

In the following letter he writes of 'Patty' (Martha Elizabeth Chapman), who acted under the name Miss E. Chapman, and who was the daughter of Ellen Kean's (Ellen Tree) third sister, Ann Tree and her husband John Kemble Chapman. Patty later accompanied Charles and Ellen Kean when in 1863 they emigrated with part of their company to Australia, and thence to America, before returning to England again in 1866.

My dear Huddleston,

Sunday

My wife intends calling on your sister to-day, which she has been prevented doing before on acct of the daily rehearsals of the Mert of Venice, from which she could not be absent.

I am unable to accompany her, so write this line to ask if it is all right with O.D. for the G? If so, I will send to you as usual. O. D. has got a stall for Saturday & I see you have one also.

Do you know that we bring Patty out as Jessica. Her aunts took her to Bath & Bristol to try her in the part & she played one night in each place.

The girl has got the real stuff in her, but she is so nervous, that I am afraid she will scarcely do herself justice until she has had some practice. If you look into to-day's Era under the head of Bristol Correspondent in the Provincial theatrical column you will read a very nice little critique on her. I should like to see you before Saturday if possible. Can you look into the Theatre morning or evening for I shall be there all day.

Yours ever,

C. Kean

It was in Kean's revival of *The Winter's Tale* in April, 1856, which ran for one hundred and two nights without interruption (from April 28th until August 22nd) that Ellen Terry made her first stage appearance in the part of Mamillius. Kean writes:

My dear Huddleston,

Leontes writes to you in the greatest hurry as the overture is already called. There is not a moment to spare.

I have three men foreign to the Club going to dine with me at the Garrick on Saturday at four o'clock. Do, pray, oblige me by making a fifth. Let me beg of you not to say "no". The party will be Sir Willm. Snow Harris of Plymouth, the inventor of lightning conductors, & Mr. Macgregor member for Glasgow & the third is the Ld Lieutenant of the County as well as M.P. for Brecon. They are all to come up afterwards to Private Box & Winter Tale it. Let me hear from you & for Heaven sake make one of us.

Yours ever,

Tuesday evening, Palace of Syracuse.

C. Kean

My dread of entering the Garrick is so great that if you refuse me I will throw all the party, M.P.'s & all, over.

The revival of *The Tempest* on July 9th, 1857, was notable for Kean's first performance, 'dignified and impressive', as Prospero. Kate Terry played the part of Ariel.

My dear Huddleston,

9th July, 1857

There was a most flattering but brief paragraph about the Princess's—the Tempest—& myself in the M. Post of yesterday—which strange to say was partially copied by O'Dowd into the Globe of last night, omitting

entirely the two lines complimentary to myself!!! Why was this? I feel somewhat hurt by such a marked omission. Can you (of course I mean without inconvenience) find out the why and wherefore?

Have you discovered yet anything about 31 Gloucester Square? Don't answer this last question by letter as it might be seen by other eyes than mine.

Let me see you soon & believe me ever

Sincerely yours,

Charles Kean

My dear Huddleston,

I am afraid, if Griffiths cannot find you a seat, there is little chance of my being able to do so. The only suggestion I can make is that you should call upon me in my dressing room to-night or to-morrow or when you like at half past six in the evening. I will plant you in some hole or corner if it is possible.

Don't be later than the hour I have mentioned as you would otherwise deprive yourself of all chance of getting a peep of the stage. Let me congratulate you on your success. How am I then to direct to you—M.P. or Q.C. or both & if both, which is to come first & which last. I want to give you all your honours so write out a full clear address, which I will keep by me & copy.

Do you think I should stand a chance for Marylebone against E. James? The Princess's stands in that district. I don't mind politics. I'll vote any way or no way.

Yours ever,

Charles Kean

Wednesday, 13th April.

The following letters were written on his tours after he had left the Princess's Theatre—

You dear Fellow,

A thousand thanks—I am so glad—Lewis* in his letter tells me Hatton talks of appealing. I don't believe he will venture the extra expense, & if he does, I presume he must fail.

Can't you come down here & dine with me next Monday at 4 o'clock & see Louis Xth in the evening? Saturday & Sunday I am engaged out.

We have been doing wonders in the Provinces.

We close here on Tuesday next 15th in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Pauline*!

We come up to Town on Wednesday—start for Dublin on Thursday—& commence there on Saturday 19th inst.

Pay us a visit if you can, & believe me ever

Yours sincerely,

C. Kean

8th Nov. 1859

Harrison's Hotel, Brighton.

*Lewis—the lawyer, George Lewis, of Woburn Place.

My dear Huddleston

I return you the enclosed as you desire & am very glad Hatton has cried "Hold—Enough". I don't know what he means by insinuating that he was not well paid. He had £600 a year & by his act he cannot get the same since he left me. I send you some papers & when you have read them I wish you would, if there is no objection from causes unknown to me, lay them on the tables of the Garrick Club, that my friends & admirers (Heaven bless the mark) may see what we are doing in Ireland. We have already acted four nights & the Houses have averaged £241 *pr* night!!! My terms are half the receipts nightly so you

may judge how well we are doing.

God bless you

Yours ever in haste & confusion,
C. Kean

Dublin, 24 Nov. 1859
Gresham's Hotel.

The music for Kean's productions was under the direction of Mr. John Liptrot Hatton (1809-1886), who also composed the overtures and incidental music in the Shakespeare plays.

BOYS ACTING SHAKESPEARE

By JOHN GARRETT

MR. GUY BOAS is the distinguished doyen of schoolboy Shakespeare. As headmaster of the Sloane School, Chelsea, he started with *Julius Caesar* in 1931, and in this book* he tells of the production there of fifteen of the plays, including such challenges to boy amateurs as *Lear*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Mr. W. A. Darlington once suggested that he was suffering the fate of all pioneers and being overhauled by his own followers. That may be as may be, but certain it is that the cause of drama as an appropriate instrument of education received timely encouragement from his achievements and has never had a more whole-hearted advocate.

This book is a better record of personal accomplishment than it is likely to prove a 'guide'. One man's meat is another's poison, and methods in schoolboy production are intensely individual. Of the author's own success with the material to hand there can be no question. He wisely warns of dangers—of making the Roman citizens a pack of uproarious fourth-formers; of allowing the four lovers in the *Dream* to be incidental to the play's comedy; of letting Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* get out of step in the quintet of voices. On the wisdom and effectiveness of having boys to play women's parts Mr.

Boas is a whole-hogger—or nearly. He had to have recourse to a neighbouring girls' school owing to difficulty in casting *Cressida*. But the experiment was not repeated. If a choice has to be made between a gifted actress and 'a boy who utters the lines clearly, sincerely, quietly . . . I for one would unhesitatingly choose the boy'. Yet remembering Lady Macbeth's lines, 'I have given suck, and know How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me', one has one's doubts. Suspension of disbelief in the boy's limitations is rarely achieved.

Boys are notoriously versatile in performance, but even Mr. Boas must have been surprised that Thersites and Pandarus of one year became Juliet and the Nurse the next. As a schoolboy at Radley he learned the vital lesson that if a play is to be successful it is much more like work than play. In his aphorisms for producers he shows how well he understood the material he was handling—'Don't go on after the cast is tired: it will come right tomorrow', 'Unless you enjoy yourself, the players won't; unless they enjoy themselves, the audience won't'. All clearly did. Mr. Boas had the faith that moves mountains, faith in Shakespeare to metamorphose initially unpromising material.

Mr. Boas's helpers with his productions are a muster-roll of celebrated names—Dover Wilson, Walter de la Mare, Granville-Barker, Sean O'Casey. Chelsea became a Mecca for such

* *Shakespeare and the Young Actor: A Guide to Production* by Guy Boas. Revised Edition. Rockliff. 21s.

pilgrims as Sir Ronald Storrs, Robert Atkins, Clemence Dane, and even Ronald Searle came to help by doing sketches. No school plays can ever have received such faithful attention from the national Press, and lavish quotations are printed here. The *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Mail*, *Observer* and *Punch* all paid repeated tributes, and even if the *Manchester Guardian* did record that Juliet's Nurse became Charley's Aunt, such national recognition must have been a stimulus to the producer. But what was the effect on the boy actors of such notoriety? They can have had little chance to follow Lawrence's dictum to 'be anonymous'. When Ian Fraser's Iachimo received a unanimous chorus of praise—'The authentic Italian villain of Elizabethan imagination'—it would be interesting to know more of the effect on his development than his headmaster's assurance that he could not have picked a boy more 'virtuous and agreeable'. Nor are we told whether their rich dramatic experience resulted in subsequent recruitment to the professional stage, or whether, as is often the case, exposure to the histrionic art in adolescence gets it out of a boy's system as a dog endures distemper.

In short one would have welcomed, with Mr. Boas's unrivalled experience, more of a considered judgment of the place of drama in education than this somewhat superficial success story. Is it too much to hope for that this shall be the firstfruits of his retirement? A story goes of a scientist who had to deputize for an absent English master. The class was involved with Portia's 'quality of mercy is not strain'd'. One smart alec asked 'Please sir, what kind of strain is meant here? Is it as when a rope is taut, or is it when you strain through a sieve?' The versatile scientist was equal to his occasion, and said 'As it was *not* strained, the question doesn't arise'. But a question that does arise is whether drama, making insatiable demands upon young people's time, is justified. Mr. Boas—and I—think it is.

Writing to his wife on board the

Ocean in 1807, having delivered an initial admonition not to allow their daughters to grow up as fine ladies, and to ban all novels from their reading, Admiral Collingwood advises the study of 'Shakespeare's plays as often as they please . . . the memory should be strengthened by getting by heart such speeches and noble sentiments as deserve to be imprinted on the mind'. It is not unlike Plutarch's motives in writing his lives of noble men. Collingwood wanted for his daughters an introduction to the compelling power of memorable speech. We who dabble in Shakespearian production have a similar motive. Although our participants will continue to use among themselves the peculiar jargon they invent for their limited purposes of communication, they will have in their memory a standard. In poetry words are charged with meaning to the *n*th power, and when these have seeped into a boy's sub-conscious, they remain there as a challenging standard.

Aldous Huxley once wrote: 'Boys and girls who have Dante for their pander are more likely to make love with style, handsomely, than those whose spiritual food is drawn from the magazines and the films'. For Dante read Shakespeare. A boy in love may not be as eloquent as Romeo, but in similar case he may well recollect how Romeo spoke. A boy going into action may not, like Wolfe, recite Gray's *Elegy*, but he may well take courage from Henry V at Agincourt. In that coterie of Christian cads which is the *Merchant of Venice*, a girl remembering Portia's speech on marriage may get a pointer to right values. How many times we have heard 'As long as I live, Sir, I shall carry those lines in my head'. To each boy his personal anthology. J. B. Priestley, protesting against excessive elaboration, once wrote 'I do not mean that these plays should only be done in barns by candlelight . . . but not all this scenery, pageantry, unnecessary business and antics, which come to bury Shakespeare not to praise him. Not the visual appeal

first—but words, words, words'. It is all a question of getting priorities right, and this, with their respect for the verse, Mr. Boas at the Sloane School, Mr. Ronald Watkins at Harrow, and Mr. David Raeburn at Bristol, Bradfield and Alleyns have notably contrived to do.

What do we expect from a school play? It can and should be as important a vehicle of training, in subordination of self to a larger whole, as the training on the field of the Fifteen or the Eleven. This applies not only to the actors but quite as much to that unseen army behind the scenes—stage-manager, prompters, designers, carpenters, property men, makers of gadgets, scene painters, orchestra, printers, call boys, lighting staff and the like. All those taking part should be made to feel themselves an integral part in an exquisite and harmonious whole, the self finding its expression in relation to and dependence upon everyone else. Acting in schools should be a fertilizing

process. The school play should be *the* event of the school year, for it is then that the school is at home to the public on the cultural plane appropriate to the values for which it stands, and where these values are associated with fun, pleasure and entertainment.

If the choice of play is worthwhile—and flyblown West End successes are best avoided—it can serve as an introduction to the adventure of living, to an awareness of the marvel of man. Because, in a phrase of Wordsworth about poetry, it can be made to 'enlarge the capability of men's minds for being excited', drama in the right hands can provide what Erasmus called a liberating discipline as well as beckoning forward to a more abundant life. Young people can be quickened by exposure to what they do not as yet fully understand, but which in their imagination they apprehend as greatness. They can make a storehouse in the sub-conscious mind for future reference, and even for guidance.

THE NEW BARDOLATRY

By IVOR BROWN

AT the end of January, when Christmas and school holiday business was over, I visited the Stratford production of *As You Like It* at the Aldwych Theatre. It was a Saturday matinée and the stalls were rated at 25s. *As You* is partly a 'musical' and, since Shakespeare obviously could not think of an appropriate title for his Rosalind's adventure, one might suggest *My Fair Lindy* or *Rosie la Douce* to justify a charge equal to those made for smash-hit song-and-dance confections. But the prices were no deterrent. The house was packed and obviously not by the show business supporters with large expense accounts, by massed school visitations, or by coach parties seeking a jolly outing. Here was the middle

class, finding the money to attend a play which they must have seen often enough or endured in the deterrent form of a curriculum item and as the raw material of an educational certificate. They may not have been enraptured, since three hours of playgoing after lunch may invite more to a passive and even comatose acceptance than to an active ecstasy. But they were obviously satisfied.

There was a time, within the experience of people not very old, when the knowing theatrical managers were supposed to say 'Shakespeare? Ruin!' There were then sad box-office figures to justify the apprehension. But that is certainly not true today. Avonside has become so overwhelmingly magnetic

that the summer pilgrims regard it as a privilege to be somehow squeezed in and even at the end of an eight months' season there is capacity business or thereabouts. Because the converging audiences are so ardent as to be omnivorous it does not matter which of the plays they get. Even productions which were harshly, and it may be, justly criticized on their first appearance are not the less attended. If you can sell *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* you can sell anything. What are the pilgrims thinking? 'We're at Stratford, by the river, near the Birthplace. Mustn't grumble'. 'Local boy makes good' is a favourite English news story. Local boy has never made better.

The Old Vic is not quite so fortunate. Its public is far less ready for the Shakespearean oddities, while it is also shy of anything not Shakespeare's. To start the autumn season of 1961 with *King John* and Marlowe's *Faustus*, both reasonably well done, was to prove, quite expensively, that the faithfuls of this temple will not swallow Shakespeare out of fashion. (*King John* was once a great favourite, thanks to Mrs. Siddons as Constance and subsequent leading players who knew how to discharge its battlefield eloquence to the audiences who then relished that kind of shot and shell as the Old Vic public of today apparently does not). To stage anything un-Bardic at the 'Vic'—Chekhov, Ibsen or J. M. Barrie—is to cause panic in those who must wring extra money out of the Treasury, via the Arts Council, to cover the gaps. (There is one exception to this law of diminishing returns, Shaw's *Saint Joan*).

The hard fact seems to be that the nearly full houses which are necessary, even with existing subsidies, to maintain solvency, are only certainly obtainable by sticking to the favourites, that is, according to present vogue, *Romeo and Juliet* and the later, greater tragedies, a play with Falstaff in it, *The Merchant* and the sunnier comedies. Are you aware of Touchstone's quip and quipage and Sir Toby's eruptions?

Do you feel that further attention to the melancholy Jaques is too melancholic to be borne, and that the stupidly savage punishing of Malvolio is no less a punishment of the audience? Never mind. You are in for them, in continuity and perpetuity. The box-office battle of the Waterloo Road must be won and won again on the playing fields of Arden and Illyria. Travellers may take occasional trips to Elsinore and Inverness for variation. Only with the risk of a dwindling audience can there be any escape from what our disc-fed juveniles would call the 'Top Ten'.

There is a good reception for the Old Vic when it carries two or three of the Top Ten out of London. Its autumn tours with a big company are inevitably expensive and have surprisingly needed little or none of the subsidy provided to cover losses. Probably the conservative Top Ten policy is necessary here too. It would be hazardous to take a rarity on the road. However that may be, Bardolatry flourishes as it certainly did not between the wars. We must remember that up to the destruction by fire of the first Stratford Memorial Theatre in 1926, the Festival was not a steady April to December sell-out. It usually consisted of a brief season at Easter and then, after a break, a slightly longer one later in the summer. The theatre was not a big one and even so it was not difficult to get in. The work done there by Mr. Bridges-Adams and his team, working on a tiny budget and without subsidy, was as good as could be. But the public was a specialized one. The Bard was known to his own, not beloved of a multitude. While admitting that the Warwickshire shrine owes much to the arrival of the internal combustion engine, motoring for all, and the change of Stratford-on-Avon into Stratford-on-petrol, we have also to accept that hundreds of thousands who thought Shakespeare a curriculum nuisance have now discovered that he is not.

The reason for this can be argued without end. I submit that one cause,

certainly not a single or a decisive one, is that modern theatre audiences are deprived of a good noise, in fact the English language in its fullness, and Shakespeare provides that. Noel Coward managed to entertain us with dialogue on the cocktail-class level which had almost no vocabulary: Harold Pinter and his imitators are doing the same on the fish-and-chips level. The audience is invited to feast on mumbled monosyllables. Both the Coward smart ones and the Pinterish tramps and toughs are doubtless realistic in their truncated speech. But this kind of half-talk creates an aural emptiness. The human head has ears. Can it be that human nature is beginning to hate a vocal vacuum and that Shakespeare has come in again as a blast of enjoyable sound?

Some of the critics have been responsible for this deprivation of our pleasure in listening by their contemptuous dismissal as 'literary' of any speech on the stage that has body and style in it. When Gwyn Thomas's comedy of Welsh life *The Keep* came to the Royal Court Theatre I suddenly found my sense of hearing agreeably refreshed. My ears were being born again. Here were people spouting without stint and enjoying their power to communicate. The piece was awarded a shared prize in the *Evening Standard* Best of the Year Awards: it would, I gather, have been placed at the top, where, incidentally, there was plenty of room, if the paper's critic had not found it 'literary'. What that critic did not seem to know was that the Welsh family depicted, like many of its kind, had been brought up on the Bible and on chapel sermons in which the almost extinct art of rhetoric still lives on.

Whatever we may think of the ethics and credibility of the Old Testament it has, in the Authorised Version, been a fountain of glorious eloquence, and those who have been soaked in those strong waters of speech fortunately do not rub it all away with the towels of conversational English. The dialogue

richly propelled by Mr. Mervyn Johns as the father of the family was not 'literary' in a cultural sense. It was the voice of a nation which enjoys pulpit vehemence and it was not the cultural drone of an Eng. Lit. lecture: above all, it was not the monosyllabic mutterings of a tongue-tied 'moron as hero'.

This slighting of a full vocabulary with the label 'literary' is disastrous. For some reason, the Irish are let off. Nobody, fortunately, tries to kick O'Casey out of the theatre because he gives his Irish folk a gift of tongues and makes them scatter rich verbal images as the Pinterites scatter grunts. But nobody else is permitted to use the English language except, of course, the dead. I have not seen the 'literary' sneer directed at Sir Laurence Olivier for choosing to open the new Chichester Theatre by dealing out a couple of Jacobean Jacks, Fletcher and Ford, and I welcome his readiness to prove that their plays are not just exam. fodder. Meanwhile Shakespeare, like O'Casey, is spared the idiotic accusation of being 'literary' and the flashing stream of his language as it flows onto the stage, even when navigated by players trained to the trickle of modern patter and no experts in the delicate music and strong thunders of our tongue, is, I believe, one of the causes, and most justly so, of the new Bardolatry. Shakespeare provides the visual as well as the aural colour. The two senses have been starved and are being, at one corner of drama's table, fed.

Congratulations to Donald FitzJohn on his so well deserved appointment to the City Literary Institute. One can hardly imagine the Training Department without its founder and builder and Donald FitzJohn has been a splendid lieutenant in recent years. He will be greatly missed at Drama League Courses for he has shown himself a sound teacher and a producer of rare taste and balance.

FRANCES MACKENZIE

FRANCES MACKENZIE leaves the British Drama League during the summer and it is a privilege to be invited to write an appreciation of her outstanding work. She has been a devoted servant of the League, of its members, and of all those thousands who have passed through her hands in summer schools and courses for just on thirty years. I have known her for a large part of this period, and shared with those numerous students a deep admiration for her exceptional quality. Indeed Frances Mackenzie occupies a unique position amongst the teachers of amateur drama throughout the Commonwealth.

She was well prepared for the job she has envisaged and created. After leaving Oxford she toured her own company in the distressed mining areas under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Trust. She started professionally under Sir Nigel Playfair and later was stage manager in several West End theatres and played comedy parts in repertory. The influence of these experiences has been apparent all through her career.

Frances Mackenzie joined the Drama League staff in 1932 and from then on has gradually pioneered and developed the training policy with which her name will always be associated. The crown of this policy is, I suppose, the Ten-Week Full-Time Course for Producers and Drama Instructors, now in its fifteenth year. This now famous Course has attracted the best kind of support from the Ministry of Education and the British Council, as well as from students from all over the world.

Ten weeks pass quickly, and as they come out of the Course dazed by the variety of experiences offered them, students have told me that they could not have believed so much richness could be crammed into so short a time. It is good to think of those students sending grateful thoughts back to Frances Mackenzie for all that she taught them and for the friendship she showed them.

Yes, the friendship she showed them. On occasion she can be pretty sharp and direct, but because she so obviously knows her job, is such an enthusiast for the highest standards, and because her warm nature has always recognized that it is people who make this world go round, not things or causes, her students obviously feel real friendship for her as well as gratitude. That is a wonderful reward for a generation's work, and she has sought no other. The record of her teachings is in her books.

It is common knowledge that for years Frances Mackenzie has stayed on pursuing her dream of the ideal training of amateurs at Fitzroy Square rather than accepting more golden jobs elsewhere. Recognition she has had in plenty, of course, and she is an inevitable choice for the Councils and Executives of national bodies concerned with her subject. But these few words are not intended to be a publicity blurb ending up with a catalogue of appointments. They are meant to be a sincere and whole-hearted salute to the first lady of Amateur Drama.

LEO BAKER



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THEATRE BOOKSHELF

Two Gifted Actors

Charles Dickens: A Pictorial Biography by J. B. Priestley. *Thames & Hudson*. 25s.

George by Emlyn Williams. *Hamish Hamilton*. 25s.

The many who have enjoyed Emlyn Williams impersonating Dickens in the full flow of a Dickens reading must have felt that if C.D. was half as good an actor as E.W. he was a very good actor indeed. That the great writer might never have written and have become instead a star of the stage is a fact generally unknown but revealed in Mr. Priestley's swift, vivid and compact summary of the troubled, turbulent, triumphant life of Dickens; the text is as compulsively readable as a story by that unVictorian Victorian, and the mass of illustration provides a lively panorama of mid-nineteenth century life. It is especially satisfactory that *la vie amoureuse* of Charles Dickens, which has recently been nastily exploited and to some extent distorted, is presented in sensible proportion. Dickens was a susceptible man of superhuman vitality. He made a mess of his marriage to poor Kate Hogarth; he made an innocent ass of himself with a ridiculous Mrs. De La Rue who wanted him to hypnotize her; and he took a young mistress, Ellen Ternan, in a rather shabby and very secretive relationship. This gave Dickens a guilty conscience and the girl no real happiness. The idea of the man as a seducer in full employment is nonsense.

But Dickens the actor is what immediately interests the reader with theatrical interests. While working in late boyhood as a shorthand reporter he took lessons in acting, rehearsing himself in considerable roles. He asked for an audition at Covent Garden and was then smitten with a severe cold. 'Literature', writes Mr. Priestley, 'owes much to this cold, for Dickens was a born actor and, if he had kept his appointment, he might well have been engaged by Charles Kemble and then have spent the rest of his life on the stage.' Better reporting jobs suddenly turned up, the prospect of an actor's life was forgotten, and at twenty Dickens was one of the quickest and most accurate men in the Parliamentary Gallery.

The essays of Boz have much to say of the amateur acting of the time and what is said is frightening. The most callow youngsters would buy for a few shillings a big part in a fifth-rate professional production and horrifyingly come strutting on as Macbeth or Romeo. Dickens had no use for that racket, but he had drama in his blood and had to get it out. He would always find time—and how he did so is a miracle—to organize as well as act in amateur productions of a quite ambitious kind. Other eminent writers, such as Wilkie

Collins, were ready to join in these activities and they not only played in London but went on tour of the principal cities. Charity benefited, including the preservation and curatorship of Shakespeare's birth place at Stratford-upon-Avon. The audiences were large and apparently undismayed. We might now, could we see the work done, have thought it crude, but there is no doubt that Dickens himself was an excellent mimic, a gay and talented improviser of party charades, and when he turned later to his big and very profitable recitations he was able to hold huge audiences with his sometimes terrifying, sometimes broadly comic, and sometimes overwhelmingly poignant presentations of the character who had hitherto lived only in print.

One of his great parts was Bobadil in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*. Another favourite was the Arctic Explorer in *The Frozen North*, a 'powerful drama' written by Wilkie Collins with some help from Dickens. A professional actress was engaged for that, Ellen Ternan; so there was some fire of affection generated amid the ice and snows of the setting. Jane Welsh Carlyle wrote sardonically of Dickens as Bobadil and observed that at a performance of Jonson's comedy attended by the Victorian V.I.P.'s Tennyson fell asleep. Mrs. Carlyle's comment occurred in a chatty, would-be-gay letter, and the lady could be waspish. We need not take her too seriously as a dramatic critic.

Dickens finally hastened his death by his enormous application to the readings and recitations. The fifth act of his life was partly tragic. He was not a happy man: he had appeared to the public as a champion of the domestic virtues and he was living in clandestine sin, an awkward situation. He aged prematurely, flogged himself through an arduous American recitation tour with stimulants, suffered from high blood-pressure, and died at fifty-eight of a paralytic stroke. If he had never been so eager to enact his own characters, who have life and to spare in their own medium of print, he would certainly have lived longer, finished *Edwin Drood* and written other and perhaps even his greatest books, for he was gaining in depth in his latest work.

After Dickens, we have, as author, the gifted creator of his image for the public of our time. The autobiography of Emlyn Williams reaches only to his entry of the professional stage. As a writer he takes his time to record his times: yet the length (more than 450 pages) is never oppressive. For since early childhood his eye has been keen and his memory exceptional. Every picture springs to life in sharply recollected detail. The Welsh home with its poverty, its discipline and its happiness is

unforgettably drawn: so is the school with that splendid teacher, Miss Cooke, later so movingly and justly rewarded by Dame Sybil Thorndike as well as by the dramatist in the play *The Corn is Green*. That woman of perception and resolve saw the talent of a small boy and propelled him steadily on to an Oxford scholarship and all the pleasures of an ample academic life in which acting was a large and finally a decisive part. The Oxford of the early nineteen-twenties, with its odd characters and gay experiments in the art of living as well as in the art of the theatre, is recaptured no less clearly than the schooldays. The Oxford Playhouse defied the dreariness of its derelict museum surroundings and became a seedling-ground of remarkable abilities, with J.B. Fagan nursing for high achievement Tyrone Guthrie, John Gielgud and many another including, of course, Emlyn Williams himself, who has now successfully (and most modestly) set down the early journey to his own success.

IVOR BROWN

Wayward Genius

A Drama of Political Man: A Study of the Plays of Harley Granville Barker by Margery M. Morgan. Sidgwick & Jackson. 30s.

In her study of Harley Granville Barker Miss Morgan is concerned solely with the plays, referring to biographical details and to Barker's other multilateral activities in the theatre only in so far as they are relevant to his art as a dramatist. By some lamentable oversight the plays of a man who has left his imprint on the whole history of the modern theatre have hitherto been neglected by scholars and theatre alike. In this their first detailed analysis Miss Morgan proves them worthy of both revival and study.

Barker touched the theatre at every possible point, and in his dramatic writing gained much from his experience as actor, producer, critic and scholar; he was indeed the 'first to bridge the gap between the academic and the theatrical approach' to the drama. Yet he was, as William Archer discovered, a wayward, even a wilful genius—with his own creative powers as with his colleagues. He was ever restlessly seeking some fulfilment, ideal, perfection that was beyond his reach. Here he is the reverse of Galsworthy who always achieved what he set out to do; but whereas Galsworthy satisfies, Barker haunts. Yet it is perhaps just this sense of imperfection, of something not quite grasped or realized, that has caused his plays to slip into disregard; perhaps it also gave rise to what Miss Morgan calls his 'lassitude', leaving his reputation to rest mainly on three plays. Barker wanted to make the theatre express his vision, and when he failed, it is possible that he turned to the criticism of Shakespeare as to one who had succeeded.

Miss Morgan's scholarly examination of much manuscript material, including drafts, notes and five early unpublished plays, reveals

how deeply Barker meditated his subjects, how carefully he perfected his unique handling of the 'meditative conversation-piece'. In tracing the developments of his dramatic purpose and achievement she skilfully suggests the unfulfilled potentialities—for there is always something unfinished, tentative, vaguely saddening in Barker's enterprises; seldom the final touch of triumph.

The analysis of *The Voysey Inheritance* is particularly illuminating. Linked with *The Pillars of Society* on the one hand, and with *Look Back in Anger* on the other, it is shown to have established the popularity of the 'naturalistic play of family life' and yet to remain 'primarily a political drama'. The depth beneath the surface is Barker's singular achievement, for his play is 'not only an indictment of society but an exploration of the nature of reality'.

The existence of two versions of *Waste* is noted. In this political study it is suggested that Barker may to some extent have taken Shakespeare for his model. He may also, of course, have encountered Henry Arthur Jones's very bad play, *The Bauble Shop* (produced in 1893, but not, understandably, included in his published works) which deals with the similar theme of a political career wrecked by a sordid amorous scandal. Might he not, too, have been pondering the theories of tragic 'waste' recently expounded by A. C. Bradley in the book he came to know so well? Due emphasis is given to Barker's presentation of passion here—an element conspicuously absent from the social drama of his time.

A perceptive analytical account of the later unproduced plays, *The Secret Life* and *His Majesty*, reveals that in the blend of fantasy and political awareness, the sense of decline, the study of failure, the search for a definition of faith, they come closest of all to reflecting the mood and temperament of Barker himself. His studies of the 'anarchies of his time', being closely 'related to individual experience', are sharply distinguished from Shaw's (no discipleship allowed here). His handling of Expressionist themes without adopting Expressionist mannerisms indicates the complexity and selective independence of Barker's dramatic art; he draws what he wants from Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Stanislavsky; by his blend of naturalism and symbolism, his subtle studies of women, his treatment of political, not social, man, he enlarges the scope of the problem play; he softens its outlines and deepens its implications by his lyricism, his delicately suggestive symbolism, his reckoning with the indefinable and the incalculable; in short, by the infusion of poetic values.

The question of his neglect in the theatre is squarely faced and answered. Difficulties of cost and casting are taken into account, but it is amply proved that the plays cannot be dismissed as dated; rather, that 'there is no substitute for Barker's individual vision' and that he is 'ahead of us in discovering the

abundant resources that the drama may command'. His work bears the enduring stamp of quality—which the more elderly will recall was the title of his memorable Presidential Address to the English Association.

Miss Morgan's scholarship delves down to the fundamentals of drama and follows Barker across its territory to the very frontiers. This is a book that needed to be written and will be welcomed by both scholars and theatre people—whose interests Barker himself had united.

MARJORIE THOMPSON

Birth of a Phoenix

Fokine: Memoirs of a Ballet Master. Translated by Vitale Fokine. Edited by Anatole Chujoy. Constable. 42s.

Once in a while a source-book of unimpeachable authority appears: Fokine's *Memoirs*, newly translated from the Russian and completed by his son is such a book. It is a well documented, handsomely illustrated record of the man who was the key figure in the Diaghilev Ballet which came to astonish and enthral Paris in 1909—the *Ballets Russes*. For had there been no Fokine, there would have been no Diaghilev Ballet.

Fokine has justly been compared to Noverre. He loosed the bonds that bound the Imperial Ballet 'ossified in one set and unchanging form', so that it became the many-splendoured thing we knew, the creative influence of which spread far and wide. How can we ever forget those original Fokine 'first nights' in all their richness? But at the start he was very much alone and Diaghilev was not even interested in ballet; he had tried his hand at it and been dismissed 'without leave to appeal' by the authorities who suspected his advanced ideas. So while Diaghilev gathered round himself a remarkable circle of artists and musicians, his famous magazine *The World of Art* according to Fokine 'almost never mentioned ballet'.

Fokine describes his dissatisfaction with ballets composed in sixteen-bar lengths (to be chopped off as required) in which point shoes and the *tutu* were obligatory for the ballerinas even if the action took place in Egypt or Ancient Greece. There was no dramatic content, no respect for different cultures or periods.

Into this outworn fifty-year-old tradition moved a specially gifted group of dancers trained by Johannsen, Gerdt and Cecchetti, in which one—Fokine—was already a ballet master. Though he took the leading roles and had great personal success, he was depressed by this 'inartistic' ballet, turning away with relief to study music and painting. His own ballets were to be indeed like paintings in movement, in which every detail had been planned with an artist's eye for its effect on the whole. He was a voracious reader and in 1904 lighted on the first-century novel *Daphnis and Chloe*. Immediately he saw it as a real Greek ballet, with dancers wearing light

chitons and soft sandals, their movements modelled on Greek art. He thereupon wrote his first libretto and submitted it with a Manifesto suggesting many reforms to the school authorities. The Manifesto fell on deaf ears and disappeared but the libretto was eventually realized by Fokine for Diaghilev some eight years later, to a marvellous score specially composed by Ravel. This was one of the most beautiful of all Fokine's ballets.

Shortly after this, Isadora Duncan, the genius of the dance who had made a triumphal progress through Europe, came to St. Petersburg (January 1905) and gave dance recitals in bare feet wearing light Greek draperies, causing quite a sensation among artists and musicians. She was fêted and befriended by Pavlova and Kchessinska—but Fokine is silent about this visitation, though he has much to say in praise of her later on. He gives, however, the very interesting information that in 1909 after seeing his ballets in Paris, she asked him to become Instructor of dance technique at her school, a post he was unable to accept.

When in April 1905 Fokine was asked to arrange a performance for his pupils, he chose *Acis and Galatea*, hoping to put his ideas into practice and compose groupings suggested by Greek sculpture. His plan was only partially successful: he was ordered to compose traditionally for the girls but he was given more latitude for the dance of fauns (boys who were not his pupils) so for them he invented a tumbling dance with unorthodox steps—and many congratulations followed. The most gifted of these boys he recalls was Nijinsky.

This same year Pavlova asked him for a solo dance for a concert to be given in the Hall of Nobles, and for this he suggested Saint-Saën's *Le Cygne*:

The dance was composed in a few minutes. It was almost an improvisation. I demonstrated for her, she standing behind me. Then she danced and I walked alongside of her, curving her arms and directing details of the poses . . . The world fame of this dance, I believe, was a justification of a new form of the Russian ballet.

After this he composed a series of ballets for charity performances, *La Vigne* (1906), which earned the praise of Petipa, *Eunice and Chopiniana* (1907), a suite of dances which contained the germ of *Les Sylphides*—the waltz for Pavlova and Oboukhov in romantic Taglioni dresses designed by Bakst. The second *Chopiniana* (1908) was renamed *Les Sylphides* by Diaghilev when he took it to Paris the following year. A little later he composed *Le Carnaval*.

It was Benois who had worked with Fokine on *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (1907) who arranged the fateful meeting between Fokine and Diaghilev. Fokine was delighted to have an opportunity of showing his ballets in Paris where Diaghilev was giving Russian Opera seasons and agreed to start work on the Polovtzev Dances for *Prince Igor*. This was to be one of

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his greatest achievements, indeed Fokine himself considers it so. It created a furore in Paris, a perfect foil to *Les Sylphides* danced by Pavlova, Karsavina, Baldina and Nijinsky. After this first season, success followed success.

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JANET LEEPER

Shaw on Shakes

Shaw on Shakespeare. An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Productions of Shakespeare. Edited by Edwin Wilson. Cassell. 30s.

This worthy companion to Dan Laurence's collection of Shaw's writings on music will have an honoured place on the shelves of all up-to-date students of Shakespeare, as well as in the Shaw's Corner of many a good Socialist home. But did Shaw really understand Shakespeare? He certainly steeped himself in the plays to which, along with the Scriptures, he accorded a lifelong priority-addiction, as if sensing that the influences of Shakespeare and the Bible somehow went deeper than he knew. But with consciousness thus limited, his intellect imposed a barrier that 'G.B.S.' (Shaw's worst enemy, as he recognized) was for ever exploiting for exhibitionist purposes. 'With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his'. To which the short answer would seem to be that Shaw did not really know the first thing about the Bard.

Ironically, the first thing about the dramatist Shakespeare—as analysis and interpretation are at long last bringing to light—is that he was religiously preoccupied with the problem of how to change human nature into nature of a superior order—with the subject-matter, in short, of what Shaw called Man and Superman. Ideas and hints as to means and ways of effecting this psychological transformation are ubiquitous, not only in the plays of maturity, but—as John Vyvyan shows in his *Shakespeare and the Rose of Love*—in even such early plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The clues are often to be found in passages and incidents dismissed by 'best' critics as preposterous or unintelligible—like the marriages in *Measure for Measure*, a play which baffled Shaw, though he could approve a propagandist trend in the even more unpopular *All's Well*. But the underlying *leitmotif*

always eluded him—notably in the case of *Cymbeline*, the very play which prompted his *alter ego* to so odious a comparison of the two minds. That immortal gibe preceded a diatribe against Irving for unintelligent cutting: 'He has quite surpassed himself by extirpating the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge. A man who would do that would do anything'—and so forth. Fifty years later, by way of improving *Cymbeline*, Shaw rewrote the fifth act, eliminating the Masque which, he asserted, had been 'introduced', like the Ceres scene in *The Tempest*, to please King James, or else an irresistible fashion had set in, just as at all the great continental Opera houses a ballet used to be *de rigueur*.

Published in the year of Shaw's death, Beryl Pogson's *In the East My Pleasure Lies* demonstrated in detail that the whole message and meaning of *Cymbeline* is unfolded in the meta-biological symbolism of the Masque. Before that Colin Still, in *Shakespeare's Mystery Play*, had established the function of the 'Ceres scene' in *The Tempest* as a corresponding key to that great allegory of man's inner growth.

Shaw, to the end of his life, at his deepest level, pursued the aim of Creative Evolution 'as far as thought can reach'—never noticing that Shakespeare had operated in the same field with a faculty that reached further. Had it occurred to him, *Shaw on Shakespeare* would have told a different story—though it might not have been so entertaining.

H. F. RUBINSTEIN

The Developing Theatre

The Seven Ages of the Theatre by Richard Southern. Faber. 36s.

Dr. Southern is well known for his immensely detailed and carefully-thought-out studies in limited fields of stage practice and history. If you have a taste for this kind of historical detection there are few books more fascinating than his *Changeable Scenery* and *The Medieval Theatre in the Round*. The present book is something quite different. It is a survey of theatrical staging from its most primitive forms to its most contemporary expression.

We are all familiar with the main lines of such a survey in the usual history books. The Greek theatre merges into the Roman theatre; then, after the darkness of the Dark Ages, liturgical drama grows up in the churches, finally to move outside into the streets on pageant wagons; plays are given in inn yards, whose shape influenced the emerging Elizabethan theatre; the inner stage and balcony of the Globe provided a multi-purpose acting area, which developed into the Restoration playhouse. And so on.

Dr. Southern will have none of this. He says practically nothing about the Greek theatre, nothing at all about the Roman theatre, nothing at all about liturgical drama, not much about pageants, nothing about inn yards, and

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doubts the very existence of any inner stage or acting balcony in the Elizabethan theatre. Instead he plots the development of the theatre in seven Ages, which he calls the Costumed Player, the Religious Festivals, the Rise of Professional Playing, the Organized Stage, the Roofed Playhouse with Scenery, Illusion, and Anti-Illusion.

In the first Age he deals with such shows as the Mummerys' Play in England and Kathakali in India; in the second Age with Tibetan Festival Drama and English Medieval Rounds; in the third Age with Interludes and Masques; in the fourth Age with the portable Booth and the Japanese Noh; in the fifth Age with Italian Opera Houses and Georgian Playhouses; in the sixth Age with Victorian Scene Painting; in the seventh Age with the Open Stage.

Everything he has to say is immensely stimulating, and it is a most valuable exercise for those brought up on the conventional stage histories to review the story again in this fresh light. Dr. Southern ranges far and wide in time and space; he illuminates fascinating correspondences between theatrical forms in Europe and Asia and Africa; he illustrates the Elizabethan stage with a photograph of a twentieth-century Basque pastorella; he compares the Padstow horse with the Balinese *barong*. For the general reader and student of the theatre this may well prove the author's most useful and popular work.

Having said all that, one is left with some doubts and some regrets. What about liturgical drama? The author seems to have fumbled this. One suspects that he doesn't believe that it was really any kind of theatre at all. Yet in his enumeration of the features of primitive theatre all over the world he lists as prime requisites not any kind of stage or setting but (1) a special costume, often inconvenient in shape and assumed with ritual ceremony, (2) symbolic gestures that convey a deep meaning, (3) archaic language that is incomprehensible to most of the audience and (4) the re-presentation of some great divine action. It is not necessary to go to Tibet or Thailand to witness primitive theatre of this nature; all of these ingredients can be observed every morning at Mass in any Roman Catholic church.

But perhaps the relationship between liturgy and drama, and the exact nature of liturgical drama, must await a special study that has yet to be written. This is a field in which the man of religion tends to be suspicious of the theatrical element, and in which the man of the theatre tends to be nervous of the religious element, but one day a sympathetic student of both religion and theatre should give us a synthesis in which the religious origins of theatrical performances and the theatrical origins of religious worship are brought together to illuminate each other. Rightly conceived, it will neither degrade religion nor emasculate the theatre.

Dr. Southern can, perhaps, be pardoned for

drawing back from that particular study. But there are even more obvious gaps. Is it really justifiable in a general history to dismiss the Greek theatre in less than three pages when the Interlude has sixteen? Indeed the chapter on the Interlude, interesting though it is, is on a different scale from the rest of the book and would more suitably have appeared as a contribution to some specialized journal.

This is a work, then, that is not entirely suitable to be read as the only guide to the development of theatrical staging; but as a complement, and in places a corrective, to the conventional histories it should take a permanent place in any theatrical library. The text is illustrated by photographs and a large number of excellent sketches by the author.

GEORGE SPEAIGHT

Hi-Style

The Method as Means by Charles Marowitz.
Herbert Jenkins. 16s.

The trouble with so many books on acting is that they are written by people who have no qualification to do so. Mr. Marowitz calls such writers 'verbose outsiders', and he suggests that the only valid discussion of theatre craft takes place in the late-night sessions so beloved by actors and writers. I do not think that theatre artists engage in such activity quite as much as is sometimes thought, but at any rate it is true that their speculations and arguments have the merit (usually) of being thoroughly practical.

This book is offered as a contribution of a similar nature, down-to-earth and professional. Various ideas and practices are described and analysed, and a further series of ideas are put forward for us to chew over. The starting point is the work of Stanislavsky, and we are given a neat summary of his discoveries and teaching regarding truth and inspiration in acting. Mr. Marowitz proceeds very usefully to indicate the differences between the Stanislavsky System and the Method. These arrive out of differences in circumstances and conditions—the System being worked within an ensemble whilst the Method has flourished outside companies and within classrooms (at least, *post* Group Theatre).

Mr. Marowitz then ranges freely over a number of imperfections which he spies in contemporary theatre practice, and he suggests that a proper understanding and usage of certain aspects of Stanislavsky and the Method would help to remedy them. He also discusses how far Shakespeare and Brecht are susceptible to a similar treatment, throws in chapters on In-the-round and improvisation, and invents the term 'Hi-Style' to cover the new approach required by actors for the presentation of work by Beckett, Pinter, Ionesco, Simpson and similar writers.

Such a collection of essays (or 'insights and outlooks' as Mr. Marowitz prefers to call them)

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promises extremely well, for their author is patently enthusiastic, intelligent and convinced of the theatre's crucial importance in our present society. He writes fluently and vigorously—although the transatlantic accent is too pronounced for my liking—and he rightly condemns a number of common faults and misconceptions. But I believe that he has had too many late-night sessions with the wrong people and has not surveyed British acting practice with sufficient objectivity. The faults no longer exist on the scale which he suggests, nor do directors carry on in the old-fashioned way which he decries, nor do drama schools cater for the 'vilely expeditious ritual' of the one-weekly repertory companies.

I have worked for many years in repertory theatres of all categories. I have taught in three leading British drama schools. I have directed many plays in London. My experience has led me to conclusions which are different from those of Mr. Marowitz, and I think this is because he has not had enough direct contact with British actors and directors. I would guess that Mr. Marowitz as a New Yorker got caught up in the Method swirl, and found it an admirable antidote to much of the artificiality and staginess which he saw in the theatre. He arrived in London expecting to find a similar situation and waving the sword of Truth with mighty sweeps. If he had only taken a good look around he might have noticed that the enemy had already fled.

Does he really believe that British actors are not concerned with the thought-processes underlying their words? Does he really believe that they forget the play and the character because of their interest during performance in the audience out front? That their natural tendency during rehearsal is to perform 'without interruption in a mellifluous cascade of sound, fury and insensitivity'? That British directors conduct their rehearsals just as if they were animated copies of French's *Acting Editions*? Obviously he does believe all this or he would not have written this book. Well, then, all I can say is that he has been working with a very non-representative group of actors. Bad actors presumably will not bother to read this book. Good ones—together with directors, teachers and playgoers—will find that, contrary to the claim of the blurb, no new ground is broken in it. Mr. Marowitz is out of date.

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS

The Well-dressed Victorian

Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories by Anne M. Buck. Herbert Jenkins. 42s.

It is a pleasure to review so good a book as this. The author's competence to deal with her subject is attested by her position at the head of the Gallery of English Costume which Manchester has established at Platt Hall, and by the number and high quality of the booklets issued by that Gallery since she took office. In

the present work she has covered the entire space of Queen Victoria's long reign with a simplicity that is born only of knowledge and understanding combined. There is no question of putting the Victorian lady under a microscope or on a pedestal and studying her from every angle as if she were a curiosity; Miss Buck approaches her subject instinctively from within, and states her facts with just that air of calm and unruffled competence that is characteristic of the Victorian ladies who smile discreetly from so many of her illustrations. She states quietly that at a given period dresses were trimmed with this and that, skirts and bodices cut thus and thus, and although—or perhaps because—there is no emphatic insistence, no attempt to lay down the law, we find ourselves accepting with complete confidence the information she gives us. If we decide to check it by reference to the sources cited in her useful bibliography, we find that that confidence was justified.

For those connected with stage wardrobe work of any kind, the construction of the book is helpful from the start. The first five chapters cover the changes in the gown itself throughout the period under review, then come individual sections devoted to underwear, outer garments, hats or bonnets, caps and gloves (including mittens). But Miss Buck—all thanks be to her thoroughness—does not consider that the subject of costume ends here. Accessories such as aprons, footwear, bags, fans, parasols and the like are reviewed in turn, so that the actress or her designer can see clearly not only what she should wear to be appropriately dressed for the date and circumstances required, but what she should carry in her hands or on her shoulders.

After all this generosity of detail, it comes as a slight shock to find men's dress treated in a single chapter, but so adroitly does Miss Buck handle the matter that we come away satisfied, just as before. Forms changed more slowly, there was a less wide range of fabrics to choose from, and noticeable changes were consequently fewer. The waistcoat alone afforded real scope for variety of cut, colour, material and pattern, and Miss Buck has not failed to recognize its capabilities. Finally, children's costume is dealt with briefly but expressively, and the book ends, as has been indicated, with a good working bibliography.

What is the secret of this unusual effect of completeness in what is really quite a small book? Possibly it is to be found in the width and depth of Miss Buck's acquaintance with her subject, and in her ability to pick out essentials, define them clearly and present them in a manner at once expressive and attractive. After all, these are the qualities that go to make the well-dressed woman and the good dressmaker alike, and by approaching her material from that standpoint Miss Buck has presented it in a way that should be of real service to a wide variety of readers.

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The illustrations merit special consideration, as they include actual specimens from the collections at Manchester and reproductions of contemporary drawings and paintings, showing how similar garments appeared to the eyes of those who saw them every day. Once again, then, an excellent sense of balance is preserved, and we see dresses and accessories alike with the eyes of their original wearers as well as with our own.

MARTIN HOLMES

Who's Who

Who's Who in the Theatre. Thirteenth Edition. Edited by Freda Gaye. Pitman. 5 gns.

This book of reference has long been known as essential to all connected with theatrical work. To the creative, faithful and industrious care of the two John Parkers, father and son, Miss Freda Gaye, herself a talented actress, has succeeded, in both senses, as the new editress. One can hardly imagine a more challenging or exacting task, since not only has the old accuracy to be maintained but hundreds of new names and events have to be included. If the volume is not to become unmanageable in size, there must be some cutting. Thus many players, whose work has not been so prominent since the last edition appeared in 1957 are dropped from the biographies, but their names are listed with the number of the editions in which their achievements were fully recorded. There may be some heart-burnings here, but some removals were inevitable. Ballet is to be the subject of its own *Who's Who*, which will be issued shortly by the same publishers; so the dancers step out into territory of their own.

A valuable new feature is the list of Centres for Theatre Research and it is both surprising and encouraging to learn how many there are: foreign sources of information are included in this section prepared by Mr. George Nash of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Library of the British Drama League is put first among 'The Special Libraries and Semi-Public Institutions'. Another excellent addition is a brief history of the Repertory Theatre in Great Britain by Charles Landstone with a list of the principal Repertory Companies, the populations they serve, and the capacity of their buildings.

Additional play lists and playbills give merited accounts of the work done and the directors responsible at the two Stratford-upon-Avon of Warwickshire and Ontario. The picture section is headed, most properly, by Dame Sybil Thorndike and Sir Lewis Casson and includes great foreign as well as native players and productions. New British theatres included in the illustrations are London's Mermaid in Blackfriars and Coventry's Belgrade. Miss Gaye is to be congratulated on her selective power as well as on her industry.

IVOR BROWN

Long Plays

Curtmantle by Christopher Fry. Oxford. 10s. 6d.

The thirty years of Henry II's great and eventful reign are covered in one almost uninterrupted action. Time passes sometimes during the brief narrative comments of William Marshal, in whose mind the episodes take place, sometimes during the progress of the actual dialogue, a device made doubly effective by Mr. Fry's verbal dexterity and finely developed sense of atmosphere. Darkness and light are contrasted throughout. Henry's contradictory character is gradually expanded in scenes of sharp dramatic tension with Becket, Eleanor of Aquitaine and, later, with his sons, who wage war against him. He dies tragically with a sense of failure. But, against the background theme of the interplay of the different kinds of law, the play gives a just measure of his achievements, his influence on the period and the many facets of his complex personality.

The Seashell by Jess Gregg. Evans. 6s. (6 f., 1 m. 1 set.) A sensitively conceived family play, set in a small town in British Columbia. The son of the household, taken away as a boy by his father, returns to his mother and three sisters, who live secluded lives. His efforts to draw out the youngest sister nearly lead to tragedy, for she lavishes her pent-up love on him. There are well contrasted parts of varying ages for the six women characters.

Casey by P. W. Turner. S.P.C.K. 4s. 6d. (6 m., 3 f. 1 set.) A meditation on the Passion. Christ is dying on the Cross, but the scene is a new town of today, for the aim is to explore the contemporary significance of the original Good Friday event. Dramatic effect is achieved by the sincerity of the play's attacks on racial intolerance and hypocrisy in religious outlook. The characters include a well-assorted cross-section of society.

Monsieur Perrichon Goes Abroad by Eugene Labiche and Edouard Martin. Garnet Miller. 6s. Sound psychology, amusing situations and expert construction keep this hundred-year-old bourgeois comedy brilliantly alive in Thomas Walton's able translation. There are seven large parts (5 m., 2 f.) and several small ones, all giving ample opportunities. The four changes of scene, including the railway station from which Monsieur Perrichon sets off with his family and daughter's suitors on his adventurous Swiss holiday, can be fairly easily managed by means of a basic set.

Home For Good by Dennis Driscoll. Evans. 6s. (4 m., 4 f. 1 set.) Broad comedy and romance are skilfully blended in this North Country comedy about a town family's brief sojourn in a village which is in the throes of producing a pageant. The humour derives from the efforts of the slow-speaking hero to hold his own against a domineering wife and also to get rid of her unwelcome brother, an ex-Army sergeant, who takes the place of the more usual mother-in-law.

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Look Out for the Catch by Jean McConnell. *Deane*. 5s. (6 m., 3 f. 1 set.) A jauntily written comedy about some of the inhabitants of a Cornish fishing village and their sufferings at the hands of an eccentric Time and Motion expert, who, though on holiday, never forgets his job. It contains a good part for an irascible old man.

Dead Ernest by Nina Warner Hooke. *Deane*. 5s. (5 m., 5 f. 1 set.) A well-planned comedy thriller set in a village on the Dorset coast. A hearty pageant producer comes up against the police inspector in her determination to clear her brother of suspected murder. The cottage in which the action takes place has a smugglers' tunnel, which plays a large part in the denouement.

Out of Thin Air by Derek Benfield. *Deane*. 5s. (4 m., 4 f. 1 set.) A young man who comes as estate keeper to an Irish country house is immediately visited by a fairy. She makes life extremely embarrassing for him. Slight but consistently entertaining on its own level.

Murder Delayed by Duncan Greenwood. *French*. 5s. (6 m., 3 f. 1 set.) The return of a wife supposed dead causes embarrassment to her husband, who has married again, especially when she tries to blackmail him. Her behaviour marks her at once as one of those born murderers, who have a way of turning up in whodunnits. The husband is the first suspect, but everyone else in the cast has a great deal of explaining to do before the unexpected solution.

Time to Kill by Diana Morgan. *Evans*. 6s. (5 m., 4 f. 1 set.) A ruthless schizophrenic with dangerous charm causes the death of the British consul in Malaga and then murders the consul's wife, with whom he had planned the crime. Suspicion gradually grows, but is delayed by the dead man's sister, who succumbs to the charm. Well drawn characters and strongly contrived situations make this a play of genuine suspense.

Matilda Shouted Fire by Janet Green. *Evans*. 6s. (9 m., 3 f. 1 set.) Lesley Paul, heroine of this two-act thriller by the author of *Murder Mistaken*, is a liar and a neurotic, and everybody knows it. So it is not surprising that no one believes her when she proclaims a man is telephoning threats to kill her. But is she lying? It makes an interesting character study, with moments of excitement and a sustained scene of horror at the end.

HILARY GARDNER

Short Plays

Wednesday's Child by Cherry Vooght. *English Theatre Guild*. 2s. (4 f.) Prize-winning play, N.F.W.I. 1961. A boy involved in a bank robbery escapes a prison sentence because of his youth. His mother does not want him back, in spite of the entreaties of the probation officer. When the mother learns of the tragedy of the officer's young daughter her attitude to the boy changes.

At the Turn of the Tide by Joyce Dennys. *French*. 2s. (5 f.) A wife has given up her career for her husband. Now he is dying and he asks a young woman from his past to visit him. The wife feels that her sacrifices were for nothing, but the doctor, in a strong verbal battle, makes her see things in their true perspective.

Atalanta by Margaret Wood. *French*. 2s. (6 f.) The story of Atalanta's race with Milanion, attractively told in verse.

No Time for Tears by Stuart Ready. *French*. 2s. (6 f.) The Commissioner's wife brings some wounded to a mission station in Uganda, and an order from headquarters that she is to be flown back. The doctor, who knows the woman is her husband's mistress, neglects to have the plane serviced, but when the crash comes it is her husband who is killed and she is left with the 'other woman' to defend the camp against a native rising.

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minstrel but he, despite his heartache, is thankful for his 'moment of grace'. *The Third Day* by Sidney Carver (4 m., 5 f.) It is the third day after the Crucifixion and some of Jesus's friends are in a room in Jerusalem when a Roman officer comes to search for the disciples, but without success. Returning while Mary Magdalen is telling how she has seen Jesus he recognizes Simon-Peter and John. Barabbas urges Peter to escape, but Peter will not deny his Master again. Barabbas kills the officer after being stabbed by him. *The Ladies of Sawston* by Pamela Ravensdale (6 f.) Based on an historical event. Mary Tudor learns that the King is ill and sets out to visit him. On being warned that the message is a trap she goes to Sawston where she hears that Robert Dudley is on his way to arrest her. She escapes dressed as a dairymaid. *El Campesino* by Anthony Booth (3 m., 2 f.) An aeroplane reported to be carrying bullion has been wrecked near the South American village of Rio Seco and Marty and Gregg come to look for the gold which is supposed to have been hidden by the bandit El Campesino before he died. But there is no gold and the padre has kept the story alive hoping that one of the adventurers who came to look for it would have the technical knowledge to bring back the river on which Rio Seco depended, and which has disappeared in an earthquake. A virile play full of suspense.

New Plays Annual for Women No. 6.

Evans. 6s. One-Act: A Company of Virtuous Women by L. du Garde Peach. (8 f.) The 'virtuous women' are Puritans and by 1660 many of them are short of the virtue of charity, as their illuminating conversation shows. *Traitor to the Queen* by Margaret Boyle. (6 f.) All except one of the Queen's ladies is under suspicion of being a spy. She is the pious blind girl and in fact the guilty one. **Mini-drama: Iron-Hot Strikers** by Richard Tydeman. (12 f.) **Three-Act: Deserted Night** by T. B. Morris. (8 f.) Dame Katharine, a strong feminist, is on her way to address the wives of a Sheik when her aeroplane makes a forced landing in the desert. The Sheik's chief wife Sabah rides up and promises to send transport, but darkness falls and no help arrives. The women spend an uncomfortable night during which one of them is shot by an unknown hand. Next day Sabah returns and many surprising relationships are sorted out. Good characterization and a novel plot.

Two Plays by Alfred Shaughnessy. *English Theatre Guild. 9s. Breaking point.* (3 m., 5 f., 4 scenes.) John is having an affair with his secretary Barbara. His wife decides to divorce him and comes to talk to the girl, and although now free to go away with John, Barbara decides to give him up. *The Tea-Cosy* (4 m., 4 f., 3 scenes.) In their anxiety to catch two 'spies' (in fact an eloping couple) two women who run a teashop do not realize that a real crime has just been committed by a 'very nice' customer.



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